

ENVIRONMENT NETWORK WEEKLY (ENW)

AEBN National ENW e-news – 11 November 2025

UPCOMING AEBN EVENTS

For a list of upcoming AEBN events, please visit [Events](#).

Missed an AEBN event? Some AEBN events are recorded and made available to Members on AEBN's [Webinars On-Demand](#).

FEDERAL

Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025 Introduced to Parliament

The Federal Government has introduced the [Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025](#) to the House of Representatives, marking the next stage of reforms to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*.

The Bill responds to recommendations from the 2020 Independent Review of the EPBC Act led by Prof Graeme Samuel AC and aims to modernise Australia's environmental framework. The reforms have been developed following consultation with industry, state and territory governments and other stakeholders.

The Bill centres on three key areas:

- Stronger environmental protection and restoration, including the power to establish National Environmental Standards, a clear definition of “unacceptable impacts,” a strengthened offsets regime, and higher penalties for serious breaches.
- More efficient and robust project approvals, through new and

updated bilateral agreements with states and territories, a Streamlined Assessment Pathway, and regional planning to direct development away from high ecological value areas.

- Greater accountability and transparency, including the establishment of a National Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an independent regulator with powers to audit, issue stop-work orders, and oversee compliance.

The Bill also provides for a Head of Environment Information Australia to improve national environmental data and reporting and introduces requirements for project proponents to disclose emissions and management measures in line with national climate policies.

The Guarantee of Origin (GO) Scheme

On 3 November 2025, the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) announced the formal launch of the [Guarantee of Origin \(GO\) Scheme](#). The scheme establishes a national, voluntary framework for emissions accounting and the certification of renewable electricity.

The GO Scheme provides a consistent, product-based emissions accounting framework to track greenhouse gas emissions and related data across supply chains. It enables Australian businesses to make credible and verifiable claims about the renewable electricity they generate or use, and the emissions profile of the products they manufacture.

For consumers and downstream users, the GO Scheme offers a

publicly accessible record of renewable electricity use and certified product information, supporting greater transparency and informed purchasing decisions.

By aligning with international certification standards, the GO Scheme is expected to help Australian producers access emerging low-emissions and hydrogen markets, both domestically and overseas. The Clean Energy Regulator will administer the program.

Draft National Climate Scenario Guidance: Comment sought

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) has released the [draft National Climate Scenario Guidance](#) for consultation. Feedback is invited until 19 December 2025.

The Guidance aims to help governments, businesses, engineers and other decision-makers understand and apply climate scenario analysis - a key tool for assessing how future climate changes could affect operations, assets and investments.

It seeks to promote a more consistent national approach to analysing and managing climate risks by clarifying terminology, outlining recommended processes and linking to relevant Australian climate projections datasets.

The draft Guidance provides:

- Foundational information and definitions
- A decision-making framework for selecting and using scenarios

- Key climate data and assumptions for a range of possible futures.

For manufacturers and other industrial operators, the Guidance will be particularly relevant when undertaking climate-related risk assessments, disclosure reporting, or the design of long-term infrastructure and supply chains.

Australia to Present Climate-Smart Agriculture Initiatives at COP30

The Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is representing Australia at the [United Nations Climate Change Conference \(COP30\)](#) in Belém, Brazil, to highlight national initiatives supporting climate-smart agriculture and resilience in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

Climate change continues to impact global food security, water resources, biodiversity and the viability of rural communities.

DAFF's delegation will contribute to discussions on sustainable production systems, regional cooperation and innovation in low-emissions farming. Australian examples being showcased include practical applications of climate-smart practices and technologies that improve resource efficiency, reduce emissions and strengthen resilience across diverse production systems.

VICTORIA

Water Price Review 2026 (Melbourne Water & North East Water)

The Essential Services Commission is reviewing [proposed water prices and service outcomes](#) from Melbourne Water and North East Water for the period starting 1 July 2026.

Both water businesses submitted their pricing proposals on 1 October 2025. The commission regulates water pricing in Victoria and must assess

each submission against the legal requirements set out in the Water Industry Regulatory Order and the commission's [PREMO water pricing framework](#).

The PREMO water pricing framework requires water businesses to demonstrate how their proposed prices and service commitments reflect customer priorities. In November 2024, the commission issued guidance explaining the information required in the submissions and the methodology that will be used to assess them.

Feedback can be submitted online by 12 December 2025 and is part of the review process.

After further consultation on draft decisions, the final determination will be released in June 2026 and will set the maximum prices each water business can charge from 1 July 2026.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Integrated Water Management Grants

The Victorian Government has announced funding through the [Integrated Water Management Grants](#) program to support projects that improve sustainable water use.

The funding aims to increase the use of recycled water and stormwater, reducing demand on drinking water supplies. Eligible organisations include local councils, Traditional Owner groups, water corporations and catchment management authorities.

Projects may involve using stormwater to create wetlands, installing rainwater systems for irrigation, developing recycled water infrastructure for agriculture, or urban cooling initiatives using recycled water. Funding is also available for research, feasibility studies and planning work that supports the delivery of future projects.

Previous projects funded under the program include a rainwater harvesting system at Warrnambool's Albert Park sporting precinct and a 2.5-kilometre pipeline supplying Werribee Zoo with recycled water from

the Werribee Treatment Plant. Since 2017, the program has invested \$72.8 million in more than 170 projects, alongside \$166 million in partner contributions.

NEW SOUTH WALES

New laws for business to separate food waste from general waste: Commence 1 July 2026

NSW EPA has advised NSW businesses and institutions that sell or handle food such as supermarkets, cafes, schools and hotels, are required to separate food waste from general waste to reduce landfill and emissions.

This new law will commence in stages from 1 July 2026, based on weekly rubbish bin volumes:

- 1 July 2026 – source separation required if weekly general waste bin capacity is $\geq 3,840\text{L}$
- 1 July 2028 – source separation required if weekly general waste bin capacity is $\geq 1,920\text{L}$
- 1 July 2030 – source separation required if weekly general waste bin capacity is $\geq 660\text{L}$.

Further [information is now available](#) to assist you to know when your business needs to comply by.

NSW EPA is encouraging businesses to speak with their waste service providers for information and advice on setting up a separate food waste collection.

The [Bin Trim](#) tool provides advice, information and rebates for equipment like bins and signage. The [Bin Trim](#) tool is now available to help assess your waste and identify easy actions to avoid and reduce waste. After conducting a self-assessment, you will get an easy-to-follow action plan to assist you to monitor improvement. Businesses completing a waste assessment may also qualify for rebates to help with the cost of leasing or purchasing new equipment to avoid, reduce, reuse or recycle waste.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: NSW Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy: Opens

The NSW Government has released the [NSW Electric Vehicle \(EV\) Strategy](#), outlining plans to expand EV charging infrastructure and support EV adoption across the state.

The Strategy includes funding for ultra-fast charging stations along major highways at approx. 100-kilometre intervals, forming “EV Super-Highways.”

In metropolitan areas, additional charging locations will be developed so that most households are within 5 kilometres of an ultra-fast charger.

Funding is also available for charging stations in areas without off-street parking, kerbside parking locations, commuter car parks and regional tourist destinations.

The government is seeking site operators and landowners interested in hosting fast-charging stations, with applications linked through the NSW EV fast charging master plan.

NSW EPA conducts pesticide compliance blitz on Mid North Coast Berry Farms

NSW EPA officers recently carried out a targeted pesticides compliance blitz across blueberry and raspberry farms in the Coffs Harbour and Nambucca regions. Approximately 20 farms were inspected in one day, with officers checking adherence to key pesticide regulations, including storage, training, record-keeping and correct application practices.

Executive Director of Operations, Steve Beaman, said the unannounced inspections are part of the EPA’s ongoing compliance program. “Our priority is ensuring pesticides are used in line with regulations to minimise environmental impacts,” he said.

Officers also collected berry samples for laboratory testing to detect any banned or unregistered chemicals. “Misuse of pesticides or applying products inconsistently with their label is an offence,” Mr Beaman said.

The EPA is also undertaking a water quality monitoring project to better understand pesticide presence in local waterways. Initial results will be published in the coming weeks. The EPA regulates pesticide use for environmental protection, not food safety.

NSW EPA orders beauty brands to remove products containing microbeads

The NSW EPA has directed beauty brands to stop supplying personal care products containing plastic microbeads, strengthening the enforcement of the state’s plastics ban.

Plastic microbeads were common in cosmetics and personal care products to add texture, exfoliate or extend shelf life.

NSW banned their use in rinse-off personal care products from 1 November 2022, as part of its commitment to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics.

Since April 2024, NSW EPA’s Plastics Compliance team has issued Compliance Notices to six companies, resulting in nine products being withdrawn from sale in NSW.

EPA CEO Tony Chappel explained that microbeads, tiny solid plastic particles commonly used for exfoliation, pose a serious threat to the environment. “Microbeads don’t belong in skincare or our waterways. They can harm marine life and potentially impact human health,” he said.

Some of the particles identified were made from bioplastics such as polylactic acid and cellulose acetate. While not derived from fossil fuels, they do not break down easily and are still considered plastics under the Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Act 2021.

Chappel noted that businesses responded promptly, with some removing products ahead of the compliance deadline. NSW EPA also worked with major retailers to ensure

rapid removal from shelves.

Wastewater treatment systems cannot capture most microbeads, allowing them to contaminate rivers, creeks, lakes and oceans. Once released, they absorb pollutants and can enter the food chain. Microbeads are often made from plastics such as polyethylene (PE), polyurethane (PU), polypropylene (PP), polylactic acid (PLA), cellulose acetate, polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) and acrylates copolymers.

NSW EPA announces restructure

NSW EPA has announced a proposed organisational restructure aimed at improving efficiency, strengthening environmental oversight, and ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

NSW EPA advise that the changes are necessary to meet expanded responsibilities following recent reforms that strengthened environmental protection laws across NSW. The organisation emphasises that the new operating model will enable it to better deliver on key regulatory priorities, including forestry, air quality, odour management, radiation, noise, dangerous goods, pesticides, plastics, climate change, circular economy initiatives, waste, water, contaminated land and industrial chemicals.

Under the proposal:

- Up to 69 staff roles may be discontinued, along with 6 senior management positions.
- A total of 182 employees are expected to be impacted.
- The overall reduction represents an 8% decrease in the EPA’s ongoing workforce of 885 employees.

NSW EPA has advised of a lengthy consultation period and confirms that implementation of the new model is not planned until the first half of 2026.

Improving work health and safety in the NSW sawmilling industry: Comment sought

SafeWork NSW has drafted an updated [Sawmilling industry code of practice](#) following consultation with stakeholders.

SafeWork NSW have created a draft code to better meet modern safety standards and new ways of working.

The code provides information and guidance to ensure risks from working in the sawmilling industry are managed according to current work health and safety laws.

The code of practice can assist anyone who has a duty of care in the circumstances described in the code of practice. Following an approved code of practice, it will assist the duty holder to achieve compliance with the health and safety duties in the WHS Act and WHS Regulation, in relation to the subject matter of the code of practice. Like regulations, codes of practice deal with particular issues and may not cover all relevant hazards or risks. The health and safety duties require duty holders to consider all risks associated with work, not only those for which regulations and codes of practice exist.

SafeWork NSW is seeking your feedback to ensure the code:

- is relevant
- is easy to understand
- supports current and emerging work practices and technologies.

Your response will assist to ensure the new code supports industry needs and protects workers and the community.

Feedback is sought by **9 November 2025**.

QUEENSLAND

Draft Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy: Comment sought

The QLD Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation is seeking feedback on the [draft Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy](#). The Strategy is the Australian and Queensland governments' roadmap for improving the health of local waterways to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

After a review and consultation, the draft Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy has been developed as a refreshed framework.

[Feedback](#) will ensure the final Strategy is robust and fit-for-purpose that supports the vision of Healthy Catchments for a Healthy Reef and Healthy People.

Please provide feedback by 11.59pm on 19 November 2025.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: For businesses with operations in QLD

The QLD Government is providing the following funding to QLD businesses to assist with waste and resource recovery programs:

- [Resource Recovery Boost Fund](#)
- [Local Government Battery Collection Program](#)
- [Growing the Recovery of Organic Waste via Food Organic and Garden Organic \(GROW FOGO\) Fund](#)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Circular Business and Market Development Grants: Opens

Businesses and organisations with operations in SA can now apply for funding through Green Industries [SA's Circular Business and Market](#)

[Development Grants program](#). The program aims to assist businesses to accelerate transition to a more circular economy.

Projects should align with at least one of three focus areas: adopting circular business models such as repair, reuse and repurposing; developing or using products made from refurbished, repaired or recycled materials; or activities that support market development for circular products or services.

Funding of up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) is available per project. Private sector applicants must co-fund at least 50% of project costs, while not-for-profit groups, councils and research organisations may receive between 50 and 100% funding, with in-kind contributions considered.

Applications close at 5.00pm on 28 November 2025.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: 2025 SA Gas Initiative

The SA Department for Energy and Mining is seeking proposals for the [2025 SA Gas Initiative](#), a \$17.5 million grant program supporting gas supply, storage and infrastructure projects.

The initiative will be delivered through the Gas Security Infrastructure Fund, established by the SA Minister for Energy and Mining to support projects that contribute to SA's long-term energy needs and its transition to cleaner energy.

The Australian Energy Market Operator's [2025 Gas Statement of Opportunities](#) forecasts potential peak-day gas shortfalls from 2028 and broader supply gaps from 2029.

The initiative aims to bring forward projects that could address these shortages.

Funding is expected to support projects that increase gas supply—such as improving geological knowledge near existing infrastructure or technologies that improve gas production efficiency—and projects that increase gas capacity, including

storage solutions and infrastructure that enables new supply.

Grants may cover up to 50% of eligible project costs, and applicants must contribute the remaining funding. Proposals must demonstrate direct benefits for South Australian gas users.

Applications close 4:00 pm ACDT, 28 November 2025.

Tender Opens for 700 MW of Firming Energy Capacity in South Australia

The SA Government is seeking tenders to supply 700 megawatts of long-duration dispatchable electricity capacity as part of the [Firm Energy Reliability Mechanism \(FERM\)](#).

The mechanism was created to address declining availability of long-duration firming generation and to support system reliability as renewable energy increases.

Around 75% of SA's electricity currently comes from renewable sources, and existing firming generators — primarily gas-fired — provide stability when renewable output is low.

Through the FERM, the government will enter contracts with eligible generators, underwriting part of their revenue to provide financial certainty. The scheme applies to both new and existing long-duration firming assets and is intended to ensure sufficient dispatchable capacity as older generators approach retirement.

The initiative follows a recent agreement to extend operation of gas generation at Torrens Island Power Station until mid-2028 while interconnection and new infrastructure are completed. The tender process is expected to attract a mix of technologies, including long-duration storage and gas turbines.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Environment Online enhances environmental assessment process

The WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has introduced a significant upgrade to [Environment Online](#), making it easier for customers to submit biodiversity and marine survey data as part of their environmental assessments.

This new functionality replaces the legacy Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessments (IBSA) and Index of Marine Surveys for Assessments (IMSA) systems, streamlining the way survey data is submitted and managed.

The Department advises that the key improvements are -

- A simplified, digital submission process
- Improved visibility and tracking of application progress
- Faster, more consistent workflows

This enhancement modernises the operations of the Department for environmental approvals and the delivery of more efficient, transparent services to the community and industry.